

VALENTINE'S DAY

By Mary Lyle, Director of Education

There are many legends about the origins of Valentine's Day and the Roman Catholic Saint who inspired it. Although there is little hard evidence of the Saint's true identity, he is thought to be St. Valentine of Rome who died during the reign of Emperor Claudius II around 270 A.D. Tradition has it that St. Valentine of Rome was a priest or a bishop who performed Christian marriages. Two hundred years after St. Valentine's death, Pope Gelasius I designated February 14 as his official Feast Day, stating, "the martyr and his acts [are] 'known only to God.'"¹

The remains believed to be those of Saint Valentine were found in a Roman catacomb. The skull of St. Valentine is on display in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Rome. Other relics from this site are on display in Ireland, Scotland, England, France and Czechoslovakia. He is the patron saint of beekeepers, epilepsy and of lovers.



Skull of St. Valentine

Valentine's Day may have been invented by medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer in a poem written around 1375. In the poem, Chaucer refers to February 14 as the day birds come together to find their mate. Medieval symbols like "lovebirds," "winged cupids," and "hearts" are still associated with Valentine's Day.



"For this was on Saint Valentine's Day, when every bird comes there to choose his mate."

— Geoffrey Chaucer



Cupids & Heart

¹ History.com Editors. (2009, December 22). History of Valentine's Day. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from https://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day/history-of-valentines-day-2#section_6

Like many of our popular traditions, the exchanging of ornate Valentine's Day Cards was popularized in Victorian England. The Valentine Card was mass-produced starting in the early part of the nineteenth century. Fancy Valentines were made with real lace and ribbons and later machine-made paper lace made the cards more affordable for the general population. The tradition became common in the United States after the Civil War.

By the mid nineteenth century, chocolate confections were produced and put into heart shaped boxes. Other traditional Valentine's Day gifts include flowers and jewelry. The holiday even inspired a popular song, "My Funny Valentine" by Rogers and Hart.

The Western Heritage Museum and Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame will be hosting a Second Saturday "Take and Make" on Saturday, February 13 from 10 am – 1 pm. The theme is of course, is Valentine's Day and we will have a lot of fun Valentine crafts for the whole family to enjoy. The packets are distributed on a first come, first served basis so come out early!

